CHAPTER TWO

The Report of a Report

I Deianeira's reply to the Chorus, 141-177.

Rhetoric of experience and remedial discourse

The Chorus had advised Deianeira against lamenting needlessly, arguing chiefly that examination of nature revealed a pattern of change guaranteeing eventual relief for Heracles. Deianeira replies to the Chorus' rhetoric of vision with a rhetorical appeal to experience.[1] The maidens, she says, are present because they have heard (πεπυσμένη 141) about her suffering, but they have no experience of it (ἄπειρος εἶ 143). Direct experience gives more reliable knowledge about reality than words one has heard. When the maidens have become mothers, then they will be able to see (ἄν τις εἰσίδοιτο 151) the troubles with which Deianeira is laden. They will be looking, however, not at Deianeira's troubles, but their own (τὴν αὐτοῦ σκοπῶν πρᾶξιν 151-152), from which they will infer Deianeira's troubles. Despite Deianeira's rhetoric of experience and vision, therefore, the method of learning that she proposes is inference.[2]

Deianeira's description of her troubles repeats in different terms the lament with which she began the play. Several themes that we saw suggested there become more explicit in this speech; on the other hand, one theme explicit before becomes implicit here. Deianeira's portrayal of the young plant (144-146) brings out the sense of natural unity that we felt implied by the notion of the father's house.[3] The sense that changeless unity is death, suggested by Deianeira's proverb, is confirmed by the plant's freedom from heat, rain, and wind, for this description calls to mind the Elysian Fields.[4] The young plant's exemption from heat (θάλπος 145) may suggest Deianeira's aversion to lust;[5] we had noted that she feared marriage in general (νυμφείων ὄκνον 7).

With the life of the maiden, sheltered from the elements, Deianeira contrasts the experience of the mature woman. But just as in her first lament, here too the experience to which Deianeira refers is substantially vicarious, at any rate no less vicarious than the maidens' solicitude for Deianeira. The mature woman, according to her account, has no more experience of heat, rain, and wind than the maiden; her troubles arise from her concern for her husband and children (150), who leave the protected home and go outside. Despite her rhetorical claim to her own authentic suffering, Deianeira's experience remains the creation of her imagination.

Even apart from her failure to mention any physical trials in womanhood, such as her description of maidenhood's physical leisure might have led one to expect, Deianeira's account of womanhood contains some curious gaps. Deianeira doesn't say quite explicitly that the condition she's describing actually is womanhood: it's the time when one is *called* a woman instead of a maiden (γυνὴ κληθῇ 148-149). Here the substitution of the signifier for its referent may imply an illusion of absence as well as of presence, since the rhetorical equivalence of signifier and referent suggests that the referent is only a signifier after all. Deianeira's next words strengthen the likelihood that she suppresses direct reference to the actual condition of womanhood because of sexual anxiety. Her biography skips straight from girlhood to motherhood, a move that has confounded many critics, and especially intriguing in light of her own emphasis on the fear she felt lest she have intercourse with Achelous ("approach his bed" as she put it in 17). The reader who finds the nubile young woman now for the first time taking in the night her share of cares (149) may think she has an aversion to coitus;[6] but then he learns that her fear comes from her husband or her children (150). The line apparently begins to indicate the woman's fear of coitus with her husband, but then conceals that indication by changing the context with the addition of τέκνων. Since a mother has no reason to fear intercourse with her children, one naturally construes both fears to concern the welfare of husband and children, and the night as the time when the woman loses sleep alone.[7]

Deianeira's vicarious concern for her menfolk therefore appears in part a rhetorical distraction from her anxieties about sexual lust. Since passion produces a loss of boundaries and liquefaction,[8] especially in the already liminal state of betrothal, the situation in this speech is similar to that in the prologue, where Deianeira's fears for Heracles distracted her from her own instability, and instability was represented by the repulsive wooer Achelous. Moreover her concealment of abiding sexual anxiety is hardly peculiar to this speech, for, as we shall later learn, she has concealed the charm of Nessus all throughout her marriage.

Deianeira had dismissed the Chorus' advice as unwarranted because they had only learned of her predicament by words and did not have personal experience of it. Nevertheless she tries to convince them of her dire situation by supplying verbal information about a πάθος she has not mentioned before. Apparently Deianeira can overlook the mediated character of the Chorus' knowledge as long as they sympathize with her. As in the first scene, where Deianeira served as her own audience, here too she acts in a little tragedy, evoking pity from the Chorus. Yet not only can the Chorus not experience Deianeira's πάθος, her πάθος itself is again not an experience but a vicarious fear concerning her *future* condition (ταρβοῦσαν, εἴ με χρὴ μένειν . . . φωτὸς ἐστερημένην 176-177), one moreover arising from the words of Heracles, in turn retailed from the priestesses of Dodona and ultimately from the leaves of the sacred oak. Deianeira's rhetoric of experience again cloaks a remedial lament for an anticipatory, remedial, rhetorical pain.

Inconsistent accounts of Heracles' departure and the oracle

We have already noted the disagreement between the alternative prophecy that Deianeira recounts and the single prophecy that Heracles and the Chorus recount. A number of factors suggest that, insofar as the play is taken to represent events, Deianeira may not be recounting the prophecy just as she heard it. First of all the exact words of the accounts of the prophecy must be examined. The difference between Deianeira's accounts and those of the Chorus and Heracles are not limited to the alternative character of Deianeira's account and the single prediction of the other two. In both of Deianeira's accounts the positive alternative includes reference to Heracles' subsequent life. She tells Hyllus that if Heracles takes Oechalia he will have a well-lived life for its remainder (τὸν λοιπὸν . . . βίοτον εὐαίων' ἔχειν 81). In the present scene she says that he'll live for the remainder with a painless life (τὸ λοιπὸν . . . ζῆν ἀλυπήτῳ βίῳ 168). The other accounts never mention Heracles' subsequent happy life, but both refer to release from toils ("[the twelfth year] will bring to an end the succession of toils," ἀναδοχὰν τελεῖν πόνων 825, and "a release from the imposed toils would be accomplished," μόχθων τῶν ἐφεστώτων . . . λύσιν τελεῖσθαι 1170-1171). Deianeira also refers to the end of Heracles' labors, indicating apparently that the two alternatives, contained within the original oracle itself, explicated this prediction (τοιαῦτ' ἔφραζε . . . εἱμαρμένα τῶν Ἡρακλείων ἐκτελευτᾶσθαι πόνων, ὡς τὴν . . . φηγὸν αὐδῆσαί . . . ἔφη 169-172).[9] But since Heracles insists that the oracle made him think he would fare well (1171) he couldn't have told

Deianeira that he might die. Deianeira's alternatives, therefore, must represent her own explication of the prophecy, which she has interpolated into Heracles' account, just as she interpolated the specification of Oechalia (74-80).[10]

Heracles' statement that he expected to fare well, however, contradicts not only Deianeira's account of the oracle but also her account of his departure on his last journey, when he seemed morbid (ὡς ἔτ' οὐκ ὤν 161) and instructed her on how to distribute his estate should he fail to return (161-163). The text simply does not yield a coherent representation on this point; it does not permit recovery of what "really happened" when Heracles departed. Nevertheless one may conjecture about how the differing accounts of Heracles and Deianeira can be supposed to have come into existence. Past conjectures have always concluded that Heracles' account was misleading, referring elliptically to the time immediately after his sack of Oechalia.[11] This explanation, besides lacking any textual support, furnishes no motivation for Heracles' confusing words.

Alternatively, however, one might recognize that Deianeira's account could also be misleading. Her patently overactive imagination, shown for example by her certitude of Heracles' doom (46-48), and her weakness for wishful thinking, revealed by her credulous trust in Nessus, suggest that her description of Heracles' departure may include some hallucinatory fabrication.[12] For Deianeira emphasizes the chances of Heracles' death in a way that implies that it might not be such a bad thing for her:

> εἶπε μὲν λέχους ὅ τι
> χρείη μ' ἐλέσθαι κτῆσιν, εἶπε δ' ἣν τέκνοις
> μοῖραν πατρῴας γῆς διαιρετὸν νέμοι (161-163)
>
> He told me what I must take as my marriage-property, and what share of the paternal land he allotted by division to his children.

If Heracles dies and does not return, Deianeira is to take part of the communal property for herself and parcel Heracles' land to his sons. Far from destroying Deianeira, Heracles' death would improve her condition; as the executrix of Heracles' estate she would have independence and power, and she would no longer be the possession of a neglectful farmer but a property owner herself. Indeed, Deianeira may regard the oracle Heracles left as an agreement either to remain at home with her after the stipulated time or to die and set her free; for her word for the writing on the tablet, ξυνθήμαθ'

(158), often denotes a contract.[13] Such a transaction between Deianeira and Heracles would be much more pleasant and dignified for her than their usual relationship of farmer to distant ploughland.[14]

The alternatives of Deianeira's account of the oracle therefore may conceivably express her ambivalence about him and the future of their marriage. Another intriguing passage in Deianeira's speech may also express such ambivalence, while suggesting a possible origin for her hallucinatory account (if it be such) of Heracles' departure: ὥσθ' ἡδέως εὕδουσαν ἐκπηδᾶν ἐμὲ/ φόβῳ (175-176). For Deianeira to awake in fear from a sleep otherwise pleasant indicates that she fears something that gives her pleasure. She fears the loss of Heracles (176-177), but this might indeed give her pleasure, as her account of Heracles' testament suggests. Deianeira's false recollection of Heracles' departure might therefore have come to her in a dream.[15]

Deianeira's account of an oracle that poses alternatives seems to be an interpretation of the oracle that Deianeira has attributed to the oracle itself. In corrupting the oracle, however, Deianeira should not be understood as corrupting an uncorrupted original, since even Heracles' version of the prophecy already involves misattribution, as Deianeira makes clear in her account of the prophecy's origin.

> ὡς τὴν παλαιὰν φηγὸν αὐδῆσαί ποτε
> Δωδῶνι δισσῶν ἐκ πελειάδων ἔφη. (171-172)
>
> As he said the ancient oak at Dodona once told, from out of the two doves (*or* priestesses).

The oracle was of course spoken by the Peleiades; indeed it was their interpretation of the sound made by the leaves of the oak. This interpretation, however, is then attributed to the tree itself and made identical to the original oracle, which was only a rustling of leaves. The cult of Dodona, therefore, institutionalizes the rhetoric of presence. Deianeira's interpolations do not violate an uncorrupted original but only repeat the process by which Dodonaean prophecies are generated in the first place.[16]

Oracles and the calendar

Deianeira feels certain that the fulfilment of the oracle is at hand, for Heracles has been away for fifteen months (ten plus five, δέκα μῆνας πρὸς ἄλλοις πέντ' 44-45), and he told her that she could assume that he was dead

if he did not return after he had been away for one year and three months (164-165). In the ancient Greek calendar a year + three months would often equal *sixteen* months, since intercalary months were commonly added. It cannot be assumed, therefore, that Deianeira is right in saying that the exact period of time specified by Heracles has now passed. In any case, the difficulties of ancient time-reckoning make extremely suspect any assertion of temporal accuracy such as Deianeira's.

II The Messenger's arrival and report, 178-204.

Just when a reply from the Chorus, reasserting its optimism, might have been expected, the Messenger arrives. Instead of remonstrating with Deianeira, therefore, they reply to her report of the prophecy by pointing to something seen (ὁρῶ 179), again employing the rhetoric of vision. They see, however, not a self-expressive thing but a signifier, the Messenger's wreath (καταστεφῆ 178), and that signifier signifies other signifiers (πρὸς χαρὰν λόγων 179), whose effect (χαράν) they anticipate. The Chorus' rhetoric of sight, therefore, with its suggestion of presence, implicitly substitutes the signifier for its putative referent. This substitution, in fact, had already occurred in the words they used to silence Deianeira, εὐφημίαν νυν ἴσχ' (178); for in asking Deianeira to observe pious silence they imply that her words have the power automatically to bring about the thing they signify. Unpleasant words therefore replace unpleasant reality as something to be avoided.

Pleasant words, on the other hand, can replace pleasant reality as a thing to be desired, as the scene of the Messenger's arrival shows. He comes to release Deianeira from fear (ὄκνου σε λύσω 181), much as Deianeira, overcome by fear of Achelous (νυμφείων ὄκνον 7) was released by Heracles (ἐκλύεταί με 21). In both cases, as we have seen, uncertainty rather than knowledge produces Deianeira's fear, and release comes with the establishment of certainty. The Messenger, however, brings certainty not of fact but of rhetoric, a claim of certainty, and like the certainty brought by Heracles it proves deceptive.[17]

The Messenger's report does not immediately convince Deianeira. Her questioning indicates skepticism; "she cannot at once throw off her anxieties" as Kamerbeek puts it.[18] She turns the rhetoric of truth against the Messenger and suggests that his report does not meet the criteria of believability, calling attention to its verbal character (λόγον 184) and assuming that its source was another report and not the Messenger's own experience of the event reported (τοῦ . . . μαθὼν λέγεις; 187). Like her twisting of Hyllus'

news (69-85), Deianeira's skepticism implies that she prefers to believe that Heracles will not return; for as her trust in Nessus reveals, when she wants to believe no improbability can stop her. The Messenger replies to Deianeira's skepticism by using rhetoric of vision and immediacy to close as much as possible the gap between his words and their referent: first he had said merely that Heracles was alive and victorious (182), but now he adds that soon (τάχ' 185), i.e., in a small gap of time, Heracles will arrive (ἐς δόμους σοὺς . . . ἥξειν 185-186), i.e., no gap of space will separate him from Deianeira, and he will be visible (φανέντα 186), i.e., no epistemological gap will qualify Deianeira's certainty about his condition. He does admit, however, that his report originates not in reality but in another report, that of Lichas (188-189).

The ambiguity of subject in Deianeira's reply (192) has caused some confusion. Lloyd-Jones argued that Deianeira refers to Heracles, and that the Messenger misunderstands, thinking that she refers to Lichas.[19] Lloyd-Jones' interpretation is attractive because it strengthens Deianeira's obstinate refusal to believe that Heracles is safe; εἴπερ εὐτυχεῖ may suggest that since Heracles is absent, he must be in trouble.[20] But the important thing to grasp about the pronouns in this passage is that they *are* ambiguous, and that their ambiguity involves confusion of signifier (Lichas, who reports the arrival of Heracles) and referent (Heracles). Deianeira and the Messenger thus collaborate in the rhetoric of presence.

The Messenger, in fact, seems to understand the rhetoric of presence, not only in his use of it to persuade Deianeira, but also in his expectation that in return for his report (ἀγγείλας τάδε 190) Deianeira will give him her gratitude (κτήμην χάριν 191) and a material reward (πρὸς σοῦ τι κερδάναιμι 191), as if the report itself were a tangible benefit. Although Deianeira ultimately does not give the Messenger anything, her promise to Hyllus of κέρδος if he returns with good news (92-93) shows that he was right to expect a reward. For the Messenger, as for Deianeira, speech does not simply communicate a message: it produces an effect.

For Deianeira to substitute the signifier of Heracles for Heracles himself, however, implies the displacement of desire onto the signifier that we discussed apropos of Hyllus' mission. The possibility of this displacement becomes explicit in the Messenger's description of Lichas surrounded in the meadow by the people of Malis. The news Lichas brings is the object of their longing (τὸ . . . ποθοῦν 196), hearing gives them pleasure (καθ' ἡδονὴν κλύειν 197). The Malians have an erotic relationship with Lichas, as a precise allusion in the Messenger's account implies:

οὕτως ἐκεῖνος οὐχ ἑκών, ἑκοῦσι δὲ
ξύνεστιν. (198-199)

Thus he is with them, he unwilling, they willing.

These words should recall *Od.* 5.154-155, the description of Odysseus and Calypso:

ἀλλ' ἢ τοι νύκτας μὲν ἰαύεσκεν καὶ ἀνάγκῃ
ἐν σπέσσι γλαφυροῖσι παρ' οὐκ ἐθέλων ἐθελούσῃ.

But he used to sleep through the nights in her hollow caves, indeed under constraint, he unwilling beside her who was willing.

ξύνεστιν (199) can of course mean "to lie with" as well as "to be with." The herald makes love to his audience through speech, virtually embodying Peitho, companion of Aphrodite.

This portrayal of Lichas has a very disturbing implication that only becomes clear if we glance ahead in the text. The Messenger will later explain to Deianeira, on the basis of Lichas' speech before the Malians, that Heracles sacked Oechalia solely in order to abduct its princess, whom he desired passionately (351-368). This speech, it appears, was the production of a man who could not resist pleasing his audience. Some fifth century Athenians recognized that the desire to please his listeners could affect the message a speaker conveyed. For example, according to Thucydides, Nicias, while campaigning in Sicily, communicated with the Athenian assembly by letter rather than through messengers, because

> He was afraid . . . that the messengers might not report the facts as they really were, either through lack of ability in speaking, or bad memory or a desire to say something which would please the general mass of opinion [τῷ ὄχλῳ πρὸς χάριν τι λέγοντες]. (Thuc. 7.8.2; Warner trans.)[21]

Indeed, here in *Trachiniae* the Messenger, who already has heard Lichas' report that Heracles is bringing home a concubine with him, does not immediately share this with Deianeira, so that he can win her favor and some profit in return for his happy news that her husband is returning (ὅπως τοι πρῶτος ἀγγείλας τάδε/ πρὸς σοῦ τι κερδάναιμι καὶ κτήμην χάριν 190-191).

Later Lichas will admit that he did not tell Deianeira about Iole because he was afraid that the news would hurt her (δειμαίνων τὸ σὸν/ μὴ στέρνον ἀλγύνοιμι τοῖσδε τοῖς λόγοις,/ ἥμαρτον 481-483). Clearly in *Trachiniae* messages are affected by the desire to please their audiences. Therefore we must entertain the possibility that Lichas' speech before the Malians was affected by his audience's wish to hear an erotic story. We shall see that there are strong reasons to doubt that the story of Heracles' love for Iole was as true as the Messenger and Lichas will eventually claim.

In concluding his report the Messenger returns to the assurance of only a tiny gap between language and reality that we saw in 185-186: Deianeira will immediately see the man himself manifest (ὄψει δ' αὐτὸν αὐτίκ' ἐμφανῆ 199). Redundancy of meaning and sound in the Messenger's words exaggerates their impression of self-identical presence: ἐμφανῆ repeats what is already expressed by ὄψει, and αὐτίκ' repeats the self/same idea of αὐτόν, as well as its sound. The sentence itself is an icon of sameness. The object of Deianeira's seeing, however, is not the same man of whom the Messenger spoke in 185-186, but someone different. Lichas now, not Heracles, is the one Deianeira will immediately see. Heracles' signifier will be present, Heracles will be absent. The presence that replaces the incomplete (because merely linguistic) report of the Messenger is itself an incomplete report.

Deianeira not only accepts the Messenger's promise that visual certitude will soon be available to her, she goes on to characterize the Messenger's own speech as a source of visual certitude (ὄμμα . . . φήμης ἀνασχὸν τῆσδε 203-204, "a sun rising from this speech," or perhaps the sun is the speech).[22] Her vision, however, is only metaphor, for as yet she has seen nothing.[23]

III Choral interlude and arrival of Lichas, 205-226.

The Chorus now, commanded by Deianeira to give their joy expression (φωνήσατ' 202), sing the praises of Apollo and Artemis. But along with Artemis they invoke the nearby Nymphs (215), seductive, deceptive goddesses who often inhabit streams, i.e., Achelous. Then their hymn to Apollo and Artemis abruptly takes a form better suited to Dionysus (216-221). The flute now rules their minds (ὦ τύρανε τᾶς ἐμᾶς φρενός 217), the ivy shakes them up (ἀναταράσσει 218), most unlike the straight arrows of Apollo and Artemis they whirl about (ὑποστρέφων 221). As Kamerbeek notes *ad* 216, the music here may well be in the Phrygian mode. Jebb's translation of οὐδ' ἀπώσομαι τὸν αὐλόν (216-217) captures the erotic coloring of the Chorus' frenzy: "I will not reject the wooing of the flute." The news that they crave

brings the Chorus, like Lichas' audience, to a high pitch of sexual arousal. The knowledge that they judge to be certain, far from pacifying the Chorus, intensifies their instability and actually deprives them of their wits (217).

The arrival of Lichas predictably causes the Chorus to proclaim visibility (ἴδε ἴδ' 222, βλέπειν πάρεστ' ἐναργῆ 224) and presence (ἀντίπρῳρα . . . πάρεστ' 223-224).[24] But although Deianeira too is glad to see (225-226), she now reverts to skepticism.

IV Deianeira's interrogation of Lichas, 227-247.

When Lichas finally stands before Deianeira and she greets him, she conditions her greeting upon the herald bringing her the same gratification (χαίρειν 227, χαρτόν 228). Lichas accepts the greeting in precisely this sense, as exchange for the deed which he possesses (κατ' ἔργου κτῆσιν 230). But Lichas' deed is only his message, his words. ἔργου (230) refers to Lichas' message, not Heracles' deed, as shown by the explanatory clause ἄνδρα γὰρ etc. (230-231). In this clause the man who fares well (καλῶς πράσσοντ' 230-231) is the one who benefits from words (κερδαίνειν ἔπη 231), and since the clause explains Lichas' greeting (εὖ δὲ προσφωνούμεθα 229), the man who fares well must be Lichas, and faring well amplifies "possession of the deed." Both ἔργου κτῆσιν and ἄνδρα καλῶς πράσσοντ' attribute to the signifier, the herald, the property of the referent, Heracles, who had previously been described as faring well (καλῶς πράσσειν 57, εὖ πράσσειν 92-93). Thus Lichas can present his message as if it were a material benefit and receive in return words as if they were a material benefit (χρηστὰ κερδαίνειν ἔπη 231). He understands the power which the Messenger attributed to his speech (196-199).

Deianeira's interrogation of Lichas begins in skepticism. In asking the herald whether she will receive Heracles alive (233) she indicates that she now accepts nothing in the Messenger's report without confirmation. As confirmation, however, she seeks merely repetition of the report, not empirical reality. Moreover, instead of asking whether Heracles is alive in the present, she asks whether she will receive him alive in the future. The answer to this query can only be a prediction, as Lichas' reply emphasizes by confirming only the past condition of Heracles of which Lichas can give reliable personal (ἔγωγέ τοί 234) testimony.[25] Though prompted by this answer to ask the most concrete question about Heracles that she can (ποῦ γῆς 236), Deianeira again lets her attention slip from the reality of Heracles' condition as reported by Lichas, to pure language, for she asks whether Heracles is

sacrificing because he promised to do so or at the behest of an oracle (239). She seems to be seeking information about whether another oracle may foretell something of his fate. When Lichas calls her attention to the women who are right before her eyes (241), however, Deianeira immediately drops the subject of Heracles and asks about them. Just as the prospect of Lichas' presence became a reality for her and the Chorus and displaced the absence of Heracles, the visible presence of the women occupies all of Deianeira's consciousness; she fails to regard them as a sign, as her dismissal of the possibility of error or deception (243) shows.

V Speech of Lichas, 248-292.

When Deianeira asks whether Heracles has been in Oechalia during the whole period of his absence, Lichas replies with a long narrative account ostensibly explaining what Heracles did while he was gone. Lichas himself will later (472-489) acknowledge that, in order to spare Deianeira's feelings, he has omitted from this narrative any mention of Iole, for whose sake Heracles sacked Oechalia and whom Heracles intends to keep as a concubine, according to Lichas. The herald's narrative, however, does not leave Heracles' sack of Oechalia unexplained; it represents Heracles' violence as a necessary and just punishment of the Oechalians.[26] Or rather it *appears* so to represent Heracles' violence, but does not, in itself, clearly represent anything. Lichas' narrative operates in a manner much like that which we have attributed to the *Trachiniae* as a whole: while it offers to a certain viewpoint the impression of a definite representation, its signifiers actually equivocate and may be interpreted in more than one way. Lichas, therefore, does not simply deceive Deianeira with a fake account of Heracles' activities, a "lying tale" as one scholar has recently called it.[27] Instead he gives Deianeira an account that is consistent with the truth as he understands it, but which he expects Deianeira to misinterpret, in effect deceiving herself.

Lichas' narrative implies the following strategy. Deianeira, the herald assumes, knows little of Heracles' activities and considers her husband an ἀγαθός. Therefore she should be receptive to suggestions that Heracles' sack of Oechalia and murder of Iphitus were acts of justice. He reinforces this receptiveness by going through the entire tale twice, the first time (248-261) providing few details about Heracles' deeds but clearly suggesting causal connections that justify his behavior. In this way he prepares Deianeira to believe that Heracles acted justly before she learns everything he did. Then in narrating Heracles' conflict with the house of Eurytus a second time (262-

283) Lichas omits Iole, and suggests that Eurytus physically abused Heracles and that the murder of Iphitus was only technically unjust. Throughout the speech Lichas implies more than he asserts by means of deliberate ambiguities.

The herald begins by telling Deianeira that, according to Heracles himself (249), he was in Lydia most of the time, not as a free man but as a slave (ἐμπολητεύς 250). Then, probably to relieve Heracles of the shame of domination by a mortal barbarian, Lichas reports that the compulsion to which Heracles submitted was Zeus' (Ζεὺς . . . πράκτωρ φανῆ 251). The word πράκτωρ, fairly rare in literary texts, is very rarely found in the sense that Easterling and other commentators think it has here, that of "accomplisher" (*LSJ* I). The commonest meaning, known from oratory, inscriptions, and papyri, is "an official who executes a judgement for debt, especially public debt, bailiff" (*LSJ* II.1). Given the anachronism common in tragic diction there is no reason not to suppose that Lichas uses πράκτωρ in this sense here; in Athens public debts were often settled by auctioning confiscated property,[28] and by calling Zeus the πράκτωρ Lichas indicates that Heracles was in financial arrears and Zeus straightened out his credit by having him put up for sale. For anyone like Deianeira who did not already know why Heracles was enslaved, this would be the most probable interpretation. Lichas mitigates his master's embarrassment by allowing him to appear an honorable man who fulfills his obligations even at some cost to his esteem.[29] But the word πράκτωρ is ambiguous, and it is also consistent with another story, one (Lichas assumes) Deianeira does not yet know. Aeschylus used πράκτωρ several times to mean *avenger*, and according to Lichas himself (274-278) Heracles' enslavement was not simply a means of fulfilling a financial obligation but the penalty he paid for treacherously killing Iphitus, the son of Eurytus. Lichas withholds this information until much later in his narrative. Although it would be logical for him to explain right here why Heracles had to be enslaved, he instead delays mentioning the murder of Iphitus until after he has provided the justification for it (262-269).[30] In the meantime, Lichas' use of πράκτωρ creates a misleading impression without denying or contradicting the account he holds in reserve.

After affirming that Heracles spent a year in the service of Omphale (252-253), Lichas next has to account for the remainder of Heracles' absence, during which he was occupied in sacking Oechalia (254-260). Heracles' love for Iole ought to enter the story here, and in fact it does, but in words that are well chosen to mislead Deianeira. Lichas tells her that Heracles swore to enslave "the one who brought this suffering near to him" ξὺν παιδὶ καὶ γυναικί (256-257). These words may have two very different meanings depending upon whether καί is taken as a conjunction or as an adverb: "with his child and wife" or "with his child, indeed a woman."[31] The latter interpretation points to the young girl whom Heracles has raped. But it could never have occurred to anyone who did not already know what Heracles had done. Instead of focusing upon Iole, Lichas instead substitutes another explanation for the sack of Oechalia by drawing a line of causation between it and its temporal antecedent, Heracles' slavery.[32] Lichas gives his explanation, however, before he makes clear what it explains, since he does not mention the city until line 259, and even then ἔρχεται is an extremely colorless verb to describe what Heracles did to it. Deianeira and the others are therefore unable to evaluate the explanation's validity while they hear it.

Lichas starts from Heracles' slavery and describes how it affected him. Heracles' reaction is perfectly in keeping with the image of a hero who has suffered an indignity. Since Heracles has the noble φύσις of a son of Zeus, his enslavement is an unjust reproach (τοὔνειδος 254) which he has a right to avenge. He sets about doing so in an altogether honorable way, by putting himself under an oath (255) which he then carries out (κοὐχ ἡλίωσε τοὖπος 258; "and the word did not go for nought"). Hence Heracles respects his oaths. The oath that Heracles swears, moreover, is consistent with the notion, common in the *Trachiniae*, of justice as reciprocation.[33] Heracles chooses to punish the guilty party by changing his condition just as Heracles' condition has been changed, that is by enslaving him (δουλώσειν 257). The punishment, therefore, will fit the crime.

But if, according to a standard of equivalence of crime and punishment, Heracles' selection of enslavement as the appropriate punishment for the criminal appears to characterize him as just, this characterization is purely illusory. Heracles' oath does not actually preserve equivalence of crime and punishment,[34] for it includes among those to be punished the responsible party's wife and child (257) or at least his child. She, or they, haven't done anything to Heracles, so their enslavement can't be justified in terms of equivalence of crime and punishment.

As it turns out, however, Heracles falls short of even this degree of correspondence between crime and punishment. Although Lichas states that Heracles fulfilled his oath, he then discloses that Heracles did not merely enslave the one who had enslaved him and that man's wife and child, but he raised an army and attacked their entire city (259-260). Furthermore, Heracles did not enslave the responsible party at all, but killed him, as Lichas himself vaguely implies much later (Ἅιδου . . . οἰκήτορες 282), and as the Messenger eventually confirms (364). Thus Heracles has even failed to fulfill his oath of enslaving the criminal. In that light Lichas' only reason for ever

introducing the idea of a punishment of enslavement can be its effect of creating an illusion that Heracles exacted reciprocal justice.

Any justice at all that can be found in the sack of Oechalia depends, however, upon the proper identification of the party responsible for Heracles' enslavement. Lichas has already indicated that the responsible party was Zeus (251). Looking again at Heracles' oath, we observe that the person he will punish is not, for example, ὁ αἴτιος, but rather ὁ ἀγχιστήρ (256), a word found only here. The scholiast's explanation exemplifies the way a typical reader or listener would take the word: he says that Lichas means to indicate the person who caused Heracles' servitude. But ὁ ἀγχιστήρ fails to denote this unambiguously. Its etymology suggests that it must mean something like "the man who had brought this calamity near to him," which is one of Jebb's explanations. But etymology does not sanction the meaning "brought it upon him," which Jebb proposes as an equivalent. Lichas' word ὁ ἀγχιστήρ really does not attribute blame to the person Heracles swears to punish. It acknowledges a gap between Heracles' suffering and this person's action. Heracles may not have been justified in contemplating any vengeance at all against this person. But wavering as it does between blame and exculpation, ὁ ἀγχιστήρ is sufficiently ambiguous that in this context Deianeira, like the scholiast and other readers, will herself supply the positive attribution of guilt that Lichas avoids making.

I have so far referred to "the proximator" as "the responsible party" or "this person" because Lichas himself refrains from identifying him until line 260. His delay has the persuasive purpose of establishing that Heracles exacted vengeance from the really guilty party before identifying who that party was. Similarly, Lichas has identified the guilty party's crime of causing Heracles' enslavement before disclosing how he accomplished it, which he narrates only beginning at line 262.[35] Deianeira, therefore, is forced to accept two propositions, that Heracles' enslavement was caused by some particular person and that this guilty person has been correctly identified by Heracles, before she is in a position to evaluate either. Eurytus' guilt has already been established as a given when his name is first mentioned at line 260.[36]

Lichas also employs rhetorical sleight-of-hand in his manner of introducing Eurytus' name. It first appears in this speech in the form of an adjective in the expression πόλιν τὴν Εὐρυτείαν· τόνδε (259-260). This construction makes understandable but awkward Greek, because the demonstrative τόνδε has no noun as its antecendent, and the possessive adjective containing the antecedent is feminine in gender, while the demonstrative is masculine.[37] The construction results from the identification of the allegedly guilty

Eurytus with the city Oechalia, an identification necessary in order to conceal the fact that, whatever Eurytus may have done, no justification can be offered for the punishment of the whole city.[38] The use of the possessive adjective, rather than the genitive of possession, seems intended to make Eurytus an inseparable and essential characteristic of the city rather than its incidental ruler, and thus to enforce identification between them.

Now that his narrative has brought him from Heracles' oath to its fulfilment in the attack on the Euryteian city, Lichas completes the narrative circle by repeating Heracles' affirmation that Eurytus was the party responsible for his suffering (260-261). His wording, however, reveals the same reluctance to openly blame Eurytus that we saw in his use of ὁ ἀγχιστήρ. μεταίτιος (260), which means "joint cause" (*LSJ*), indicates that Eurytus did not bear sole responsibility for Heracles' suffering, even though he and his city are the sole objects of Heracles' vengeance. Like ἀγχιστήρ, μεταίτιος discloses a gap between cause and effect with infinite possibilities for extenuation of Eurytus' guilt: his responsibility for Heracles' suffering may really have been very small or even incidental, depending upon the role of the other μεταίτιος. Yet as in the case of ἀγχιστήρ, the context in which Lichas places μεταίτιος obscures for the listener its extenuating possibilities. First of all Lichas does not identify the other cause. An alert listener might recall Zeus' role as πράκτωρ in line 251, but hardly due to any emphasis furnished by Lichas. On the other hand, by specifying that Eurytus was the "only μεταίτιος among mortals" (μόνον βροτῶν 261), Lichas rhetorically stresses the uniqueness of Eurytus' guilt despite the qualification to which it is subject. Therefore while stopping short of naming Eurytus as the only guilty party, Lichas nevertheless implies that this is the case.

Lichas now arrives at the heart of his speech, his explanation of how Eurytus caused Heracles' enslavement (262-276). First he tries to show that Eurytus provided Heracles a justification for killing Iphitus (262-269). Then, after narrating this murder (269-273) Lichas relates how Zeus punished Heracles with enslavement for his treachery (274-276). Thus Lichas again implies, as he did in lines 256 and 260, that Eurytus caused Heracles' enslavement. Finally, Lichas concludes the narrative portion of his speech by reference to the sack of Oechalia (282-283). Lichas' strategy in this entire section is to describe the altercation between Eurytus and Heracles but suppress the role of Iole, whom Heracles had desired as his concubine. In this way Lichas not only refrains from telling Deianeira about Heracles' new lover, but he also makes Eurytus appear to have abused Heracles for no reason at all.

Lichas sets the scene with Heracles arriving at Eurytus' home and hearth (262). As Jebb notes, Lichas adds the word ἐφέστιος to indicate that the obligation of hospitality was binding upon Eurytus when he misbehaved toward Heracles. ξένον παλαιὸν ὄντα (263) adds further stress to this idea by suggesting that Eurytus' abuse of Heracles violated a long-standing relationship between them. Since the relationship of ξενία imposed obligations upon both parties, however, the fact that Heracles was Eurytus' ξένος παλαιός would make his demand that Eurytus hand over his daughter (359-360) at least equally culpable. Another ambiguity regarding the guilt of Eurytus lies in this passage's oblique reference to Homer. The words ξένον παλαιὸν ὄντα recall *Od.* 21.27, ὅς μιν ξεῖνον ἐόντα κατέκτανεν ᾧ ἐνὶ οἴκῳ, "who in his own house killed him that was his guest," referring to Heracles' impious murder of Iphitus, Eurytus' son.[39] Thus the words ξένον . . . ὄντα, like πράκτωρ and ἀγχιστήρ, are consistent with accounts that either justify Heracles or incriminate him.

Lines 263-264 have attracted much comment because the μέν . . . δέ construction πολλὰ μὲν λόγοις ἐπερρόθησε, πολλὰ δ' ἀτηρᾷ φρενί seems to suggest an opposition between speech and something more real than speech, but both clauses are governed by the single verb ἐπερρόθησε, "he railed at him," which denotes speech alone. Lichas, by imputing insane intentions to Eurytus, aggravates the charge against him without actually saying that his offense went beyond words. Jebb's note on this passage illustrates the interpretive operation that Lichas may be understood to hope Deianeira will perform. Jebb says that the construction is zeugmatic, and that a finite verb should be understood with πολλὰ δ' ἀτηρᾷ φρενί, a finite verb such as ὕβρισε. Thus he demonstrates Lichas' ability to create in the mind of his listener an illusory word not actually in the text.

Eurytus' insults, which Lichas now reports (265-268), concern an archery contest between Heracles and Eurytus' sons (265-266) and Heracles' status as a slave (267-268). All versions of this archery contest except Lichas' specify that Iole was the prize,[40] so we can pretty confidently assume that this is where the herald has omitted Iole from his narrative. In the traditional story, Eurytus had offered the hand of Iole as a prize for the man who could defeat him and his sons in an archery contest, but he denied her to Heracles although Heracles had surpassed them. Lichas, not wanting to mention Iole, leaves out the reason for the contest and says nothing about a prize being denied Heracles. Eurytus' taunt seems to focus on Heracles' equipment. As an illustration of ἐπερρόθησε (264), it would seem to mean that *although* Heracles had unerring arrows, he was a worse archer than Eurytus' sons; this would confirm Eurytus' insanity, since an archer with unerring arrows must

be the best. But the words might equally well mean that *since* Heracles had unerring arrows, he was inferior; i.e., Heracles' use of unfair equipment proved his inferiority in terms of skill.[41] The remark about Heracles being a broken-down slave might be Eurytus' explanation of why he didn't think Heracles a suitable spouse for his daughter. Again Lichas' words seem to vindicate Heracles, but remain open to a different interpretation.

The insults, however, present another syntactic difficulty arising with φώνει δὲ (267), which cannot complete a μέν . . . δέ construction with χεροῖν μέν in 265 because χεροῖν μέν belongs to Eurytus' speech, while φώνει δέ belongs to Lichas' narration. χεροῖν μέν therefore appears to introduce a μέν clause without a corresponding δέ clause, and φώνει δέ a δέ clause without a corresponding μέν clause.[42] Obviously the speaker of such a sentence runs the risk that his listener will accidentally try to fit these two halves of a μέν . . . δέ construction together, especially since "hands" and "voice" are a variant of the familiar ἔργον-λόγος contrast. Some editors have even sought to emend φώνει to φωνῇ to obtain such a contrast. But the difficulty probably arises from Sophoclean ethopoeia rather than textual corruption. If Deianeira were to make the error suggested above, she would assist Lichas' purpose of defaming Eurytus. The illusory contrast would give the impression that Eurytus, who said something (φώνει δέ), did so in addition to acting with his hands (χεροῖν μέν). The fact that the hands in question are really Heracles' and that Eurytus has so far done nothing with his hands is precisely what makes such an illusion necessary to Lichas' task of defaming Eurytus while remaining consistent with his alternative explanation.

The final difficulty of the passage concerns the unexpressed subject of ἦν that ὠνωμένος modifies (268). All the indications within the passage suggest that Eurytus is the subject of ἦν. He is the subject of all the finite verbs in direct discourse including ἔρριψεν (269), the verb in the clause to which ἡνίκ' ἦν (268) is subordinate. Furthermore, the whole passage describes Eurytus' outrageous behavior, and violence at banquets is often associated with drunkenness. Therefore while the subject of ἦν remains absolutely ambiguous any listener who attempted to resolve the ambiguity by following contextual clues alone could easily conclude, and could only conclude, that ὠνωμένος describes Eurytus.[43] Lichas may calculate that Deianeira will interpret him in precisely this way. Yet, since the subject of ἦν is unexpressed, it could be Heracles. The tradition does characterize Heracles as an excessive drinker, and his drunkenness might have given Eurytus a good reason to throw him out.[44] Again, Lichas' ambiguity creates an illusory narrative representation by strongly suggesting one interpretation while permitting another that is not improbable.

Now that Lichas has given the impression of establishing that Eurytus treated Heracles with outrageous hubris he has provided what will serve as Heracles' justification for murdering Iphitus. In narrating Heracles' deed Lichas' primary problem is to show how this murder could have been Heracles' retribution for what he had suffered at the house of Eurytus. What Heracles does to Iphitus in a sense reciprocates what Eurytus did to Heracles, inasmuch as Heracles, who was thrown from Eurytus' house (ἔρριψεν 269) takes his revenge by throwing Iphitus (ἧκε 273).[45] But since Heracles was only thrown from the house, while Iphitus was thrown from a height and killed, any correspondence between crime and punishment is pure verbal illusion, dependent upon the use of words meaning "throw" for both acts.

Even if one assumes that the two kinds of throwing really are equivalent, the question still remains why Heracles should exact vengeance not from Eurytus but from his son. In describing the circumstances of the murder Lichas neither says nor even implies that Iphitus had done Heracles any harm. At this point the best that Lichas can do to involve Iphitus in his father's insults is to link the events at Eurytus' house and Iphitus' meeting with Heracles in a relative clause (ὧν ἔχων χόλον 269). Such a clause of course provides no logical connection between the crime of Eurytus and the punishment suffered by his son, but it does create a rhetorical link between them in the context of Lichas' narrative. After reporting the murder of Iphitus, however, Lichas asserts that Zeus would have regarded it as just (ξὺν δίκῃ), except that he objected to the means employed (278-279). Lichas knows this is so because the gods do not like hubris (280). Lichas has not said that Iphitus acted with hubris, and he does not say so here, but he does suddenly refer to the overweening ones (ὑπερχλίοντες 281) in the plural without further specification, suggesting that Iphitus belongs to this group without asserting it.

The actual murder of Iphitus provides Lichas with his greatest challenge, since while obscuring Heracles' barbarism he must concede that the murder was unjust in order to explain the punishment of enslavement which Heracles must endure. He accomplishes this obfuscation by postponing his acknowledgment that Heracles effected the murder by treachery (δόλῳ 277) until after he has described the murder, and by making the description itself so elliptical and confusing that no clear picture of the event can be drawn from it. In reading the description (272-273) it is important to consider that Lichas may assume that Deianeira does not already know that Iphitus was killed by treachery. Indeed, if so he assumes correctly, for Deianeira's own account, ἔκτα κεῖνος Ἰφίτου βίαν (38), "that man killed the force of Iphitus," makes

the murder sound like an epic confrontation, with Iphitus a powerful opponent. Lichas' description of the murder does not indicate that guile was used. In specifying that Iphitus' mind was on one thing while his eye was on another (ἄλλοσ' αὐτὸν ὄμμα, θατέρᾳ δὲ νοῦν ἔχοντ' 272-273), Lichas describes Iphitus in a state where he could be taken unawares without treachery being necessary, since whatever he was looking at did not register with his mind. Heracles may have come right up before Iphitus without any concealment, but escaped notice because of Iphitus' absent-mindedness.

Lichas' account also obscures the locale of the murder. He says that it occurred at a πλάξ (273). This word usually means a flat surface like a plain. Although it sometimes denotes the flat top of a hill or mountain, when so used it regularly takes the hill or mountain in the genitive (see *LSJ s.v.* 1), which is not the usage here. The usage in this description is consistent with a translation like "from the top of a tower-like plain," which of course makes no sense. πυργώδης poses another problem: as Jebb notes, when used elsewhere, it refers to a building. But this peculiar word seems to preserve a trace of another account, one that Lichas has suppressed. According to all the other versions that specify Heracles' manner of killing Iphitus, Heracles threw him either from a tower or from the city-wall of Tiryns.[46] The top of such a structure would be flat, so it might in a pinch be denoted by πλάξ, though not so that anyone who didn't already know the story could recognize it. Thus Lichas has avoided a graphic depiction of Heracles' brutality while at the same time remaining faithful to the story about it.

The justice of Zeus follows swiftly, but according to Lichas it punishes not Heracles' murder of Iphitus but only his use of treachery in committing it. Here Lichas implicitly defines crime as non-correspondence. The crime of treachery lies in the failure to maintain correspondence between one's appearance and one's real intentions. Moreover, since Lichas emphasizes that Heracles killed Iphitus alone (αὐτὸν μοῦνον 277) by guile, and includes this in the explanation of his punishment, he suggests that Heracles' crime was partly his failure, in committing a novel act, to correspond to himself.[47] But like Heracles' punishment of Iphitus, as justice Zeus' punishment is purely metaphorical. In view of some accounts of Heracles' enslavement to Omphale, in which he was her willing lover, the penalty that Heracles paid for murder could be described as a one-year term in a Lydian bordello, which somehow falls short of equivalence. Lichas, however, is more than discreet about his master's Lydian sojourn, and in saying that Heracles was sold, Lichas suggests that Zeus' punishment did fit Heracles' crime, since Greek often metaphorically speaks of someone who has been destroyed by treachery

as having been sold. Heracles, who could be said to have sold Iphitus in the metaphorical sense, is thus sold himself in the literal sense.

Now Lichas exonerates Heracles of guilt in the murder of Iphitus. Although he assures Deianeira that Zeus would have countenanced an open murder of Iphitus (τἂν 279), he only infers this from his belief that in general the gods always act in the same way (280); the justification itself is contrary-to-fact (279). Moreover, even if the gods do invariably punish insolence, Lichas still hasn't demonstrated that Iphitus in particular was insolent. The justice of Lichas in exonerating Heracles is doubtful because the case of Iphitus is different from those where the gods hate insolence. But Lichas relies upon the listener's acceptance of the general statement to facilitate her passive acceptance of the tacit imputation of insolence to Iphitus. Moreover, even the gods' hatred of insolence must be called into question. In the generalization "the gods don't take kindly to *hubris*, either" (Easterling's translation) the conduct of the gods is actually an unknown inferred from a larger generalization, the common nature of gods and men, of which the known part is the nature of men. But mortals obviously do both tolerate and practice insolence. Upon examination Zeus' vindication of Heracles proves to be another rhetorical illusion.

Needless to say, all the objections made to divine justification of Iphitus' murder apply equally to the extension of justification to the murder of Eurytus and the enslavement of Oechalia (281-283).

In indicating that Heracles was sold as punishment for his murder of Iphitus Lichas finally links the insolence of Eurytus to Heracles' enslavement. The establishment of this link had appeared to be the purpose of the narrative from 262 onwards, but Lichas is surprisingly unemphatic about his accomplishment now. We would expect him to complete the narrative circle and stress the connection between Heracles' enslavement and the enslavement of Oechalia. He does return to the sack of Oechalia and justify it (281-283) concluding the narrative part of his speech, but the justification does not mention Heracles' enslavement, substituting instead the hubris of the Oechalians. Lichas may hope to forestall Deianeira from thinking back along the narrative's chain of causation, as she would have been tempted to do had he brought his narrative back to its beginning. Reviewing the chain of events in Lichas' narrative, we see the following: Heracles' enslavement was caused by his treacherous murder of Iphitus, and the murder was caused by Eurytus' insolence: therefore Eurytus caused Heracles' enslavement. Now, even dismissing for argument's sake the ambiguities in Lichas' account of Eurytus' insolence, Eurytus cannot reasonably be said to have caused Heracles to kill Iphitus,[48] much less to have caused him to do it in the particular way that led

to his punishment. The chain of causation that allows Heracles to identify Eurytus as the sole mortal responsible for his enslavement has at least one illusory link, as Lichas' cautious wording had suggested. Lichas, therefore, rather than invite Deianeira to examine his narrative a second time, distracts her from it by creating yet another illusory link, metonymically expanding the theme of hubris, which he had used to justify the murder of Iphitus, to justify as well the murder of arrogant Oechalians, unspecified in name and number, and the enslavement of their city.[49]

Lichas' narrative therefore suggests, though it does not assert, a justification for Heracles' sack of Oechalia. It produces the impression of a certain representation while remaining open to interpretation, showing how something that appears to be a representation may actually be only the interpretation of a particular audience. Thus Lichas' narrative illustrates microcosmically Sophocles' complete understanding and mastery of the technique which we attributed to him in our introductory chapter. But its most immediate consequence for our reading of *Trachiniae* is this: it raises the possibility that the deeds of Heracles which it narrates are themselves open to interpretation. As we shall see, despite the criticism of the Messenger (351-368) and Lichas himself (475-478), the interpretation of Heracles' behavior which Lichas' narrative suggests is not clearly false.

Lichas concludes his narration by gesturing toward the slaves who are visibly present. He had begun by citing Heracles as the source of his speech (ὡς φησ' αὐτός 249) to give it authority and deflect Deianeira's displeasure, and he concludes by averring that he is a faithful messenger (πιστός 286) who merely carries out (τελῶ 286) his master's instructions. A faithful herald corresponds to his master, therefore, just as reality corresponds to true prediction (τελεσθῆναι 174). Both the herald's speech and the master's instructions, however, are signifiers, so fidelity between them does not imply truth, correspondence of signifier and referent. But Lichas may in fact fall short even of fidelity, since he apparently exceeds Heracles' instructions, which did not specify that his love for Iole should be concealed (480). The wordplay of πόσις τε σός (285) and πιστός (286), moreover, may suggest that correspondence binds husband and wife, and that in ordering Lichas to bring the captives to Deianeira Heracles pretends to fulfill his duty to her as her husband.

In his final words, Lichas returns to Deianeira's very first question, would Heracles return. He tells her to think (φρόνει 289) that he will. The next sentence explains this injunction, as γάρ (289) shows; in saying that the news of Heracles' return is the most pleasant to hear (ἥδιστον κλύειν 290) of all the pleasant news he brings (λόγου πολλοῦ καλῶς λεχθέντος 289-290)

Lichas could be explaining why he added it, but he might also be taken to explain why it ought to be believed. He seems to bring Deianeira's attention back to the pleasantness of the message itself so as to win her favor. Even as he asserts most forcefully his language's derivative (from Heracles) authenticity (285-286) Lichas appreciates and exploits its non-derivative character as a source of pleasure. Thus καλῶς λεχθέντος (290), in recalling καλῶς πράσσοντα (230-231) from Lichas' greeting, suggests that instead of masquerading as deed, pleasant language can now proclaim itself independent of deed.

The Chorus apparently pays no attention to any part of Lichas' report except the assurance of Heracles' return, which it fully endorses, declaring to Deianeira that her joy is clearly visible (ἐμφανής 291). They elaborate this word by reference to those present (τῶν μὲν παρόντων 292) and the things Deianeira has learned through report (πεπυσμένῃ λόγῳ 292). Obviously a report cannot be visible; thus they have attributed visible presence to a verbal signifier. Less obviously, even the captives and Lichas only signify Heracles, and therefore, as we have noted already, though visible they do not provide certainty of Heracles' presence.

VI Deianeira's pity, 293-334.

In the prevailing view Deianeira responds to Lichas' report with a simple manifestation of selfless compassion for the Oechalian captives.[50] Given our appreciation of the difficulties in Deianeira's earlier speeches, however, we must regard this interpretation with great skepticism. Deianeira's pity speech brings into play her ambivalence about Heracles, her perception of her own situation, and the self-serving aspect of pity and lamentation, in a text characterized by suppression and contradiction.

Most critics have overstated the degree of joy at Heracles' success expressed by Deianeira.[51] Even Kamerbeek's word "hesitation" seems excessive; Deianeira never in this speech or afterwards says that she actually feels happy about Heracles' successful return. Her first statement is a potential optative (χαίροιμ' ἄν 293); it does not clearly indicate that Deianeira does rejoice, but only that she would be justified if she did. At best we can say that she may suggest her happiness, but on the other hand she may not. Her second statement, far from indicating any spontaneous feeling for Heracles, suggests that *constraint* (ἀνάγκη 295), and only constraint (she mentions nothing else) impels her happiness to coincide with Heracles' success. The very idea of constraint suggests *un*happiness and perhaps even the

violence to which as a wife she might be subject. Moreover Deianeira's objectification of happiness (τοῦτο 295) deprives it of any vividness it might have as her own feeling. Yet even despite her subjection to force, Deianeira does not clearly succumb, as the conjunction introducing the next sentence (ὅμως, "nevertheless," 296) shows. Deianeira's speech therefore offers no support to the view that she loves Heracles and longs for his homecoming with undivided heart.

Interpreters also sometimes overestimate the selflessness of Deianeira's compassion for the captives.[52] She makes quite clear at the beginning and end of her lament that her pity for the captives arises from fear lest a fate like theirs befall someone close to her: ταρβεῖν (297), δέδοικα (306).[53] Therefore she cannot be said to feel compassion for the captives for their own sake alone. Deianeira appears to extrapolate from the experience of the Oechalian captives to her own: their experience becomes a model for her husband's and children's. Yet to at least as great an extent, she extrapolates from her experience to theirs, because she is already in a position like theirs.[54] Deianeira first evinced pity for the captives when Lichas mentioned that they came from an ἀνάστατον χώραν (240-241). She now describes them as ἐπὶ ξένης χώρας ἀοίκους ἀπάτορᾶς τ' ἀλωμένας (299-300). Both passages recall her description of herself and her family, ἀνάστατοι ξένῳ παρ' ἀνδρί (39-40) and her lamentation of the lot of the married woman, who unlike a girl has no place of her own (χώροισιν αὐτοῦ 145).[55] Deianeira's pity for the captives therefore depends on their capacity to mirror her own situation. This becomes even more evident when she selects Iole as the special object of her pity. Herself the daughter of a king, Deianeira projects the same condition onto the mysterious captive (309ff.). Iole's aura of intelligence (φρονεῖν οἶδεν μόνη 313) attracts Deianeira, who herself is proud of what she regards as her intellectual distinction (οὐδ' ἥτις οὐ κάτοιδε τἀνθρώπων 439; γυναῖκα νοῦν ἔχουσαν 553).[56] She even reproduces the detail of dividing Iole's life into periods of maidenhood and motherhood (ἄνανδρος ἣ τεκνοῦσσα 308), omitting betrothal as she did in narrating her own development (148-150).[57] When she has at last learned the captive's identity and status as her rival, she not only continues to pity her but actually interpolates the new information into her original reaction (464-467). Her language on this occasion (τὸ κάλλος αὐτῆς τὸν βίον διώλεσεν 465) closely resembles that which she used to describe herself as Achelous and Heracles fought for her: ἐκπεπληγμένη φόβῳ μή μοι τὸ κάλλος ἄλγος ἐξεύροι ποτέ (24-25).[58] "Iole, as prize of Heracles, as woman-chattel, is only another rendering of Deianeira herself .... Pity for [her] comes easily to [Deianeira] because it is only another guise of the self-pity she has lived

with."[59] Yet although on some level Deianeira recognizes the common lot she shares with Heracles' Oechalian captives, she never makes this recognition explicit. Since even when she was alone, in the prologue, Deianeira did not explicitly acknowledge that Heracles was responsible for her suffering, there is no possibility that here she suppresses overt mention of her unhappy relationship to Heracles just to deceive the others present; Deianeira herself is deceived.

Deianeira's suppression of her own suffering from the speech also suggests the remedial effect of pity and lament that we have noted before. In her pity for Iole and the other captives Deianeira finds refuge from the predicament she cannot bear, forgetting her own pain in her absorption with that of others. Thus for Deianeira not to know Iole's identity is a real misfortune for her (ξυμφορά 321), since it prevents her from fully objectifying her pain in Iole. Her fear for Heracles and her children performs the same remedial function as her pity: as an anticipation of pain it serves as psychological preparation, while as a projection of pain onto others it distracts her from her own troubles.

Deianeira's strategy of evasion also figures in the prayer that concludes her lament for the captives. In praying not to *see* Zeus enslaving her children she metonymically substitutes the sight of harm for the harm itself, implying that her prayer concerns her own feelings as much as it does the welfare of her children. Then she makes this wish to evade pain to herself even more clear by adding a wish for her own death in case Zeus does enslave her children. The wish for death, of course, is characteristic of Deianeira's response to anxiety.

At the same time, however, Deianeira's evasions retain indications of the pain they seek to evade, indications that one is tempted to call "Sophoclean slips" because they evince so clearly Sophocles' grasp of the basic phenomenon of psychic displacement explained to the modern world by Freud. We have already noted that in fearing for her children Deianeira implies awareness of Heracles' potential for turning his violence against them. An even more striking sign that the captives arouse Deianeira's fear of Heracles appears in the words she uses to express her fear on his behalf:

> ὅμως δ' ἔνεστι τοῖσιν εὖ σκοπουμένοις
> ταρβεῖν τὸν εὖ πράσσοντα μὴ σφαλῇ ποτε. (296-297)
>
> Nevertheless those who are prudent can fear lest the successful one at some point slip up (*or* fear the successful one, lest he . . .)

Explanation that τὸν εὖ πράσσοντα is "proleptic acc. of the object"[60] cannot erase the fact that the accusative with ταρβέω normally denotes the object of fear. Deianeira's words therefore can suggest that she fears Heracles, the successful one.

VII The Messenger tells Deianeira about the role of Iole in Heracles' sack of Oechalia, 335-392.

The sections of the first epeisodion that follow take the rhetorical form of an exposure of falsehood and its replacement by truth, and so it is understood by all the characters.[61] Nevertheless it cannot be too strongly emphasized that the Messenger can bring no independent testimony to bear on Lichas' story, but can only claim that Lichas had previously told a story that was different (346-348).[62] Although Lichas eventually confirms the Messenger's charge of a disparity between his two accounts and asserts that his earlier account was true, he does not explain how he knows that it was true. There may be reason to doubt that Lichas has any reliable information about Heracles' plans for Iole. The replacement of "lie" by "truth," therefore, is a replacement of one *logos* of doubtful relationship to reality by another whose relationship to reality is also, perhaps equally, doubtful.

We had noted earlier in this epeisodion that the Messenger exaggerated the verifiability of his report (185-186, 199). Now as he interrupts Deianeira while she enters the house he claims her attention by again promising absolute knowledge (πάντ' ἐπιστήμην 338) that she can acquire from him (μάθῃς 336, ἐκμάθῃς 337). Still, in order to convince her that he has such knowledge, he must appeal to the probability that he has it, which Deianeira can infer from the truthful message he brought before (340-341). This message, however, proved truthful only in its prediction of the arrival of another message; it has not been substantiated by the arrival of Heracles himself, as οὐδὲ μάτην (340-341) would imply. In this case too the Messenger's knowledge proves to concern not reality, but another message:

> ἀνὴρ ὅδ' οὐδὲν ὧν ἔλεξεν ἀρτίως
> φωνεῖ δίκης ἐς ὀρθόν, ἀλλ' ἢ νῦν κακὸς
> ἢ πρόσθεν οὐ δίκαιος ἄγγελος παρῆν. (346-348)
>
> This man utters nothing true in what he just said, but he was either lying just now or a dishonest messenger before.

In saying that Lichas did not speak straight on (δίκης ἐς ὀρθόν 347) he obviously means that his speech did not conform to reality.[63] But in fact the Messenger has no basis for this claim, for he knows only that Lichas has failed of correspondence between two *logoi*, not between language and reality. The Messenger infers that one of the *logoi* must fail to correspond to reality, but he assumes that the other must be true. Even though the Messenger is without access to the reality with which both statements are concerned, and thus without a method for establishing the truth of either (347-348), it doesn't occur to him that neither account might be true. When the correspondence of account to account takes the place of the correspondence of account to reality, one of the accounts substitutes for reality. This substitution may be regarded as equivalent to the rhetoric of presence or substitution of signifier for referent.

Now the Messenger repeats to Deianeira what he heard Lichas say. He frames his account with references to witnesses (352, 371-373) who can confirm it, but though these witnesses can testify to the correspondence of the Messenger's report to Lichas' earlier report, they cannot corroborate Lichas' report itself. The Messenger, however, though he begins by quoting Lichas in indirect speech (λέγοντος . . . ὡς etc. 351-358) soon slips into direct narration (359), thus fully accepting Lichas' first speech as truth and eliminating it as a layer of discourse. He now speaks as if his report about Heracles derived directly from the origin. Then like Lichas he enhances the credibility of his report by reference to the visible (ὡς ὁρᾷς 365).

Yet the report does not "reveal the truth" as simply and straightforwardly as the Messenger and most critics would have us believe. Since the Messenger contests Lichas' report to Deianeira with regard to only one fact, Heracles' desire for Iole,[64] his assertion that the entire causal structure of Lichas' narrative needs to be overthrown requires more argumentation than he supplies. Close examination of the Messenger's narrative, moreover, shows that like Lichas' speech, it too raises questions concerning its source, its motives, and its veracity.

The Messenger's account of Lichas' account begins by stating the cause of Heracles' sack of Oechalia: he did it for the sake of the maiden (τῆς κόρης ταύτης ἕκατι 352-353) and the god Eros charmed him into doing it (Ἔρως . . . νιν . . . θέλξειεν αἰχμάσαι τάδε 354-355). For all its direct rebuttal of the version we have just heard, the Messenger's report and Lichas' have one important common feature: both exculpate Heracles by assigning an important role to a god.[65] In giving either account, therefore, Lichas fulfilled his role as Heracles' representative,[66] depicting his chief's behavior in a comparatively favorable light. Blaming the sack of Oechalia on Eros, whether

true or not, is a rhetorically effective maneuver, as shown by the Chorus' and Deianeira's respect for love's power (Chorus 497-522, 860-861; Deianeira 441-449, 643-644).

Next the Messenger proceeds to reject as causes of Heracles' sack of Oechalia his enslavement in Lydia and his murder of Iphitus (356-357), but he does not deny that they actually happened, nor does he explain on what grounds Lichas singled out Heracles' love for Iole from these other factors and proclaimed it the sole cause. Lichas' report to Deianeira showed that he could offer a factually true and psychologically credible account of the sack of Oechalia in which Heracles was motivated by injured pride and a sense of "justice." Such an account could still have been given even if Iole's role had been made explicit. She was in a sense the object of a property dispute between Heracles and Eurytus, and Lichas had to omit her from his narrative only to spare Deianeira's feelings (δειμαίνων τὸ σὸν μὴ στέρνον ἀλγύνοιμι . . . ἥμαρτον 481-483).

One might compare the role of Briseis in the deadly dispute between Agamemnon and Achilles in the *Iliad*. Since this conflict between men concerns possession of a woman, it could be described as erotically motivated; indeed Achilles himself claims that he loved Briseis (9.342-343). Yet when Agamemnon offers to return Briseis, Achilles refuses to accept her (9.336-337), and in arranging reconciliation with Agamemnon Achilles declares that he wishes Briseis had died before he and Agamemnon had fought over her (19.56-60). Agamemnon for his part claims never to have slept with Briseis (9.132-134). Clearly Briseis is desirable to Agamemnon and Achilles less as an object of lust than as a symbol of status. Heracles in *Trachiniae* may well desire Iole in the same way; at least Lichas and the Messenger are not in a position to be sure that he doesn't.

There is, moreover, yet another possible reason that Heracles wanted Iole: he may have wanted her, not for himself, but for Hyllus. That at least was the reason reported in one version of the myth, that of the fifth century mythographer Pherecydes (F Gr Hist 3.82a). Heracles' command (1222-1224) that Hyllus take Iole as his δάμαρ certainly suggests that this might have been Heracles' intention all along; the fact that Heracles himself had slept with Iole (1225-1226) would not disprove this but only further obscure the text's depiction of his feelings and intention.

The Messenger's narrative of the events leading up to the sack of Oechalia shows that non-erotic factors could be excluded as Heracles' motives only with some difficulty. In order to depict Heracles' passion as the sole cause of his sack of Oechalia, the Messenger must entirely suppress from his narrative any other material, suggesting that when Eurytus denied

Iole to him Heracles attacked Oechalia immediately (ἡνίκ' οὐκ ἔπειθε . . . ἐπιστρατεύει 359-362). Only the imperfect tense of ἔπειθε reveals that all this took place over a long period of time,[67] the time in which the events of Lichas' narrative took place. Heracles could hardly have "persuaded" Eurytus to give Iole to him *after* he had killed Iphitus,[68] but the Messenger's report raises precisely this illogical possibility so as to forge a much closer and more exclusive causal link between the request for Iole and the sack of Oechalia than the events themselves supplied.

The difficulties in the Messenger's narrative culminate in his unemphasized revelation that before attacking Oechalia Heracles himself had put forth a false accusation against Eurytus to justify what he was about to do (ἔγκλημα μικρὸν αἰτίαν θ' ἑτοιμάσας 361). If as seems probable T. Wilamowitz and Kamerbeek are right in supposing this a reference to Lichas' story[69] then it explains Lichas' frequent attribution of his narrative to Heracles (249, 253, 261). But since the precise issue in question is Heracles' motive for attacking Oechalia, his dissimulation puts the truth beyond reach. No way exists to establish that Heracles attacked Oechalia because he *loved* Iole rather than because he *wanted* her, whom he regarded as his rightful property, won in a fair contest. Even if Heracles himself had proclaimed that love was the reason (and the text furnishes no evidence that he did), this statement would be unreliable in view of both its own exculpatory utility and Heracles' manifest ability to create explanations at will.[70]

The problem of Heracles' motive in attacking Oechalia becomes even more acute if we study Heracles' character elsewhere in the *Trachiniae* to determine which motive seems most probable. Heracles never indicates that he loves Iole and never calls on her in his misery. Although he confirms that he has slept with her (1225-1226), he only mentions her in order to bequeath her to Hyllus, referring to her (perhaps contemptuously) as τὴν Εὐρυτείαν . . . παρθένον (1219).[71] On the other hand, Heracles' manner of compelling Hyllus to execute his commands displays his aptitude for using the rhetoric of justice to disguise his own egotism: οὐ δυσσέβεια, τούμὸν εἰ τέρψεις κέαρ (1246). Lichas' speech therefore appears to portray Heracles' character accurately,[72] and the persuasiveness of the Messenger's account of his motives is correspondingly weakened.

Therefore we must not be taken in by the rhetoric the characters use to convince themselves and one another that the narratives of Lichas and the Messenger, or rather the two narratives of Lichas, differ as falsity and truth. They represent alternative *interpretations* of Heracles' motive,[73] and together they illustrate the famous doctrine of Protagoras that "concerning everything there are two *logoi* each opposed to the other" (DK 80A1, DK 80A20). In

offering two different explanations of Heracles' conduct Lichas displays the ability to debate two sides of the same question taught by Protagoras and other sophists. And this teaching was based on a belief in the self-contradictory, unstable, flowing, and hence unknowable nature of phenomena--their likeness, in other words, to Achelous/Dionysus.[74]

The whole narrative of the *Trachiniae* can now be seen as an illusion built around and concealing the unknowability of Heracles' motive for sacking Oechalia, for the belief that only Heracles' love for Iole motivated him proves to be the basis for the Messenger's *inference* that Heracles will not keep Iole as a slave, but rather as a lover. In saying that Heracles does not mean Iole to be his slave the Messenger moves from the past to the future (μηδὲ προσδόκα 367) and from the testimony of Lichas to probability (εἰκός 368) based upon that testimony (εἴπερ ἐντεθέρμανται 368). The Messenger will, to be sure, eventually attribute his conclusion about Iole's status to Lichas himself (δάμαρτ' ἔφασκες 428) but Lichas does not confirm this and it may represent another "interpolation" like those of Deianeira. Lichas will corroborate the Messenger's belief that Iole will have an important role in the household (488-489), but it remains a belief, another addition of *logos* where reality is promised (τὸ δ' ὀρθὸν ἐξείρηχ' 374). It is never confirmed.

To Deianeira, however, the Messenger's speech is almost transparent; immediately she bewails her actual situation (πράγματος 375). Oddly, though, she remains more concerned about Iole's name and status (ἆρ' ἀνώνυμος πέφυκεν; 377-378) than about her role in the household, accentuating the self-deceptive function of her interest that we noted earlier. The Messenger's contradiction of Lichas and confirmation of Deianeira's intuition that the girl might be the daughter of Eurytus proves also to be the detail that elicits belief from the Chorus (383-384), as if Deianeira's intuition were the standard of truth against which the story was to be judged.

For the Chorus, the most desirable state of affairs is one that manifests correspondence: the correspondence of the Messenger's story to Deianeira's guess convinces them of his truthfulness, and their interpretation of Lichas' and Heracles' misdeed in bringing Iole into the house lays particular stress upon its violation of correspondence: it was an action not suited to the doer (μὴ πρέπονθ' αὐτῷ 384) and it was therefore done secretly (τὰ δὲ λαθραῖ' 383-384), that is, without correspondence of appearance and reality. Neither the abduction of Iole herself, nor even her introduction into Deianeira's home, seems in itself as important to the Chorus as the inconsistencies of the deed, as they show by exempting from their curse evildoers who do not act in secret to hide the division in their character which the deed manifests (383).

VIII Interrogation of Lichas, 393-496.

Although Deianeira and the Chorus are already convinced by the Messenger's account, they still deem it necessary to obtain confirmation of it. What they actually seek to confirm, however, is not the truth about Iole but rather the truth about Lichas' report: did he say what the Messenger claims or didn't he? They assume that if Lichas can be made to confirm the Messenger's story then its truth is assured. Correspondence between stories, therefore, serves as a substitute for correspondence between a story and reality.

For Lichas, however, the goal at first is to avoid providing such correspondence. Each attempt by Deianeira or the Messenger to get him to disavow the account he gave them of the sack of Oechalia meets a reply that attempts either to fortify that account or to weaken the standing of his interrogator. The entire scene is reminiscent of a legal investigation and probably displays the tactics of Athenian pleaders.[75] Asked by Deianeira if he is telling the truth, Lichas immediately swears by Zeus (399); the fact that he does so knowing full well that he is lying[76] demonstrates the purely rhetorical utility of Zeus as a guarantor of truth. On the other hand, skepticism about knowledge provides the witness with a rational means of refusing testimony: Lichas can say he doesn't possess the knowledge that is demanded of him, as he has already done (314, 317) and now prepares to do again (399, 401).

The Messenger tries to extract testimony from Lichas by pointing out that he is lying to his mistress (402); this in essence appeals to the authority of the court and its power to punish perjury (410-411). Lichas at first replies simply by insulting the Messenger (μῶρος 414). But when he allows the Messenger to interrogate him more closely he must resort to more sophisticated tactics. Asked whether he had said that the beautiful captive was Iole, Eurytus' daughter, Lichas tries to undermine the Messenger's testimony by suggesting that its truth depends upon its corroborability by witnesses (τίς . . . μαρτυρήσει 421-422). For Lichas to demand witnesses in this instance, where he certainly must know that he spoke before many people, indicates that he is mechanically repeating a standard technique of argument. Told that there are many witnesses (423-424), Lichas disparages their testimony as itself unreliable (425-426). He objects to the testimony that the witnesses might bring, however, not, it seems, because it fails to include supportive evidence (as Jebb supposes)[77] or its divergence from "real happenings" (Kamerbeek's interpretation)[78] but rather because of its form: it cannot be sufficiently exact (κάξακριβῶσαι 426) and therefore must be dismissed as an impression (δόκησιν 426).[79] Lichas' rhetoric assumes that an exact *logos* can only be a simulacrum of reality; it remains, however, a *logos*. Moreover testimony is to be measured not against reality but against this *logos* (ταὐτὸ δ' οὐχὶ γίγνεται 425). Very like a trained speaker, Lichas demands of the common witnesses whom the Messenger might call an extremely precise account beyond their verbal abilities. Furthermore, Lichas' word ἐξακριβῶσαι has strong sophistic associations,[80] and his objection to the word δάμαρ (428-429) may reflect the careful usage of Prodicus. (The Messenger's reliance upon likelihood [εἰκός] in 366-368 suggests that Lichas did not actually declare that Iole would be Heracles' mistress. Kamerbeek regards the Messenger's use of δάμαρ here as δείνωσις, rhetorical exaggeration.)[81]

Deianeira breaks the deadlock between the Messenger and Lichas when she makes a lengthy attempt to persuade the herald to confirm the Messenger's story. At the center of Deianeira's argument stands the threat that if he remains silent he will endure the ignominy of being known as a liar (449-456). Before and after this threat, Deianeira assures Lichas that Iole will not be harmed by her in any way (438-449, 457-467), because neither the news nor the reality of her affair with Heracles can affect Deianeira. Both before and after these assurances, Deianeira begs Lichas to speak (436-437, 467-469).

Deianeira's speech is therefore a carefully constructed oration, not a passionate outburst. It has as its basic *topos* the contrast of καλόν and κακόν: Deianeira herself is καλή and thus incapable of acting badly; Lichas too should be καλός and tell the truth. The person who knows how things are and is sane (καλῶς φρονεῖ 442) acts in accordance with that knowledge; τὸ καλόν is therefore another kind of correspondence. In the case of Eros, the appropriate response to its natural vagaries is acceptance, for love conquers all, as Deianeira knows from personal experience (κἀμοῦ 444). Deianeira seems to argue that her experience of love exempts her from its power; for it is unthinkable that with her knowledge of it she could behold it other than sanely (εἴ . . . μεμπτός εἰμι, κάρτα μαίνομαι . . . οὐκ ἔστι ταῦτ' 445-449). Her portrayal of love as a disease (νόσῳ 445) contributes to this strategy, for she thus regards it as a temporary abnormality.[82] Fifth century medicine, moreover, had already observed that exposure to certain diseases conferred some immunity against a second attack.[83]

Deianeira paradoxically claims detachment through involvement, stability through upheaval. In extrapolating from her own experience of love to that of others, she forgets what her own experience has been. Only thus can she imagine that she will be able to view the affair of Heracles and Iole dispassionately. The psychological mechanism is exactly that of pity, and the present speech continues to manifest Deianeira's projection of her own

feelings onto Iole. Nothing that either Lichas or the Messenger have said so far would suggest that Iole was taken by Heracles willingly, yet Deianeira imagines that she is in love with Heracles, as shown by the feminine χάτέρας (444), indicating that Eros rules Iole, and later by εἰ ἐντακείη (462-463).[84] τῇ μεταιτίᾳ (447) also suggests that Iole wanted to become Heracles' concubine and somehow seduced him. By projecting the disease of love onto Iole, Deianeira can pretend to be free of it herself.[85] (Indeed, Iole even substitutes for Heracles as sacker of Oechalia [γῆν πατρῴαν οὐχ ἑκοῦσα . . . ἔπερσε κἀδούλωσεν 466-467].) Yet in averring that love does rule her (ἄρχει . . . κἀμοῦ 443-444) Deianeira discloses the passion that her rhetoric seeks to suppress.[86]

Now Deianeira attempts to persuade Lichas to confirm the Messenger's report (her insistence that he "tell the whole truth" [453] displays how completely the Messenger has already convinced her) by appealing to his self-interest. She begins by suggesting that truthfulness is natural, and lying something that must be learned (μαθών 449, μάθησιν οὐ καλὴν ἐκμανθάνεις 450, παιδεύεις 451). Lichas' lying therefore represents a fall from the natural state. But Deianeira contradicts herself in thus attempting to marginalize lying, since if Lichas did not learn how to lie from Heracles, and he didn't already know how, he couldn't teach himself (αὐτὸς αὑτὸν παιδεύεις 451), and if he did know he didn't need to teach himself. Lying therefore may not be a supplementary skill that needs to be learned, but a skill as natural as speaking.

Deianeira next argues that, whatever lying may be in itself, it looks bad (ὀφθήσῃ κακός 452). Although even if he lies Lichas will remain a free man (ἐλευθέρῳ 453) he will have a contrary reputation, and this gap between his being and his seeming will itself be a tangible doom (κήρ 454). Thus Deianeira again employs the rhetoric of presence, regarding the signifier as its referent. As we noted apropos of her appeal to Hyllus' sense of shame (66), this rhetorical substitution appears fundamental to the heroic ethos of the *Trachiniae*.[87]

Finally Deianeira assures Lichas that he cannot hope to lie and retain his good reputation, since exposure is certain, because many people will reveal his speech to her (456). This confirms that she believes truth-telling to be the normal thing among men.

Recognizing that Lichas may be afraid to tell her about Iole, Deianeira now hastens to insist that the knowledge of her affair with Heracles, like the reality (448), will not harm her (458). As proof she claims that her knowledge of Heracles' other affairs has never led her to issue a reproach of his paramours (461-462), assuming thereby that her feelings and her language

always correspond and that her feelings may thus be inferred from her language. Even if this were true, however (and Deianeira's speech in the next scene will prove that it isn't, 543-546; let us also remember that Deianeira has kept the charm of Nessus with her throughout her marriage), it furnishes a weak foundation for Deianeira's assurances. Deianeira's argument essentially appeals to her past experience (459-461) from which she generalizes to predict the future. Her past experiences of Heracles' infidelity, however, differ substantially from the (apparent) case of Iole, for Heracles has brought no other mistress into her home. Deianeira's expectation that Iole will live in her home, and not Heracles' infidelity with her, proves the very thing that makes the affair intolerable to Deianeira (545-546).

One can well imagine that Deianeira never reproached the lovers of Heracles because to do so would have exposed the very pain that she wishes to forget. The maneuver is the same as that of pity, and indeed Deianeira connects the two in this passage, since the newest addition to the number of Heracles' lovers whom Deianeira silently tolerates is Iole (ἥδε τ' 462), and she will not reproach her because (ἐπεί 463) she pitied her. The text makes the projective nature of Deianeira's pity especially clear in this scene, since Deianeira says that she pitied Iole because of the pain her beauty had caused her and her city (464-466), even though Deianeira had known nothing of these things when she began to pity Iole. Besides interpolating this motive into her earlier thinking, she interpolates it into Iole's own appearance, for she says that she pitied Iole for this reason when she looked at her (προσβλέψασ' 464). Not content that the unconsciously detected similarity between herself and Iole be confirmed by the Messenger's report, in order to distract herself entirely from her own predicament Deianeira must wholly objectify it in Iole by imagining it visible there.

Deianeira's final words to Lichas, however, mark a departure from her previous argument. She had begun by invoking Zeus as the guardian of correspondence between word and deed,[88] and throughout her speech she has attempted to persuade Lichas on the basis of consistency: she is self-consistent in not condemning lovers (444-446, 459-467), and Lichas ought to be consistent with his honest self (449-454). Now she admits that Lichas may lie to others (468-469), but she wants him to tell the truth to her (469). This despairing acceptance of non-correspondence may be due to her consciousness of Heracles' infidelities (459-460) and excessive punishment of Oechalia (466-467). Yet she transforms even it into a kind of consistency, since Lichas is to speak truth to Deianeira always (ἀεί 469).

The best description of Lichas' response to this speech (472-489) would be that he tells Deianeira exactly what she wants to hear. Lichas' every point

echoes part of Deianeira's speech. Her first point was that she was σώφρων and would not challenge a god like Eros (438-449); as his first gesture Lichas seconds her claim (σε μανθάνω θνητὴν φρονοῦσαν θνητά 472-473). Deianeira clearly believes that the Messenger's account is true, as her refusal to accept Lichas' silence shows. Lichas confirms what the Messenger has said (475) in his presence, except the girl's name, Iole, and the fact that Eurytus was her father (419-420): Lichas' admission that Heracles conquered Oechalia because of Iole (476-478) confirms the Messenger's assertion of the same thing, made in Lichas' presence (431-433), and Lichas' injunction to Deianeira to accept Iole (στέργε τὴν γυναῖκα 486) implies confirmation of the Messenger's suggestion that she would be Heracles' δάμαρ (428). (Precisely speaking, Lichas confirms that these statements are true, not that he made them.) On the other hand, he confirms nothing that the Messenger told Deianeira when he wasn't present that wasn't repeated in front of him. For example, he says nothing about the god Eros, who the Messenger said had charmed Heracles (354-355), nothing about Heracles trying to persuade Eurytus to give Iole to him (359-360), and nothing about Heracles' pretext for waging war against Oechalia (361). He also clarifies none of the difficulties in his earlier speech, such as how Heracles sought Iole in the first place and Heracles' cheating in the contest of the bow (265-266), how Heracles killed Iphitus (270-273), and what he did in his year with Omphale (248-250). Thus despite his insistence that he has told the whole story (πάντ' . . . λόγον 484) Lichas has done no more than confirm exactly what he thinks Deianeira already believes.

Lichas' next point, that Heracles did not tell him to conceal anything (480), replies to Deianeira's contemplation of whether Lichas had been taught to lie by Heracles or had taught himself (449-451). His explanation of why he lied, that he did not want to cause Deianeira any pain (δειμαίνων . . . μὴ . . . ἀλγύνοιμι 481-482), was suggested by Deianeira herself (457-458). Lichas then explicitly refers to Deianeira's asseveration of her sympathy for Iole (462-467) and warns her to stand by it (485-487). He affirms the necessity of this by reference to the submission of Heracles to love (488-489), recalling Deianeira's words about the rule of Eros over all (443-444).

Lichas' speech, therefore, is a calculating piece of rhetoric, which rather diminishes its strength as confirmation of the Messenger's story. But even if Lichas did say everything that the Messenger attributes to him, and believed it all, he is simply not in a position to affirm the truth of all of it. His statement that Heracles did not tell him to hide the news about Iole and did not deny it (480) falls short of a claim that Heracles actually revealed his intention to him. Even more importantly, Lichas and Deianeira assume that once

in love with Iole Heracles will remain in love with her. Yet this contradicts precisely the mutable nature of love that, as Deianeira herself recognizes (440), the case of Heracles' passion for Iole illustrates. (In this light it is particularly ironic that Lichas should expect Deianeira's words about her feelings to be solidly grounded [ἐμπέδως 487]).[89] Moreover, as we noted above, the events as narrated by Lichas in his two accounts do not indicate unambiguously that Heracles desired Iole because of lust rather than because he thought her his property or because he wanted to unite her with Hyllus.

Deianeira's final words of the scene touch upon the themes of justice and correspondence. It would not be just (δίκαια 495) for Deianeira, having received gifts, not to send some in return (ἀντὶ δώρων δῶρα 494). Like that which she received, the gift she sends will also have a hidden element.[90]

IX First stasimon, 497-530.

Epinicion deconstructed

The news of Heracles' infatuation with Iole fresh on its mind, the Chorus celebrates the power of Aphrodite. Many features of this ode suggest Pindaric epinicion.[91] The first sentence declares its concern with victory (νίκας 497) and a great victor, Aphrodite. The ode deals with a contest (and a myth, all in one), that between Heracles and Achelous, and before arriving at this contest it dispenses with several other potential subjects in priamel fashion (498-502). The subject itself is introduced by a series of interrogatives, τίνες . . . τίνες (504-505), reminiscent especially of Pi. *O.* 2.2 (τίνα θεόν, τίν' ἥρωα, τίνα δ' ἄνδρα).[92] Identification of the combatants by their cities of origin ('Αχελῷος ἀπ' Οἰνιαδᾶν, ὁ . . . ἄπο . . . Θήβας . . . παῖς Διός 510-513) also suggests epinicion. τετραόρου (508), dubiously applied to a bull here, is a distinctly Pindaric epithet, elsewhere always applied either to horses yoked together or to four-horse chariots.[93] The epode contains the so-called *schema Pindaricum* of singular verb with plural subject (ἦν . . . κλίμακες, ἦν . . . πλήγματα 520-521).[94] The ode has a triadic structure, unlike the other odes in this play but like most epinicia,[95] and its meter has a prominent dactylo-epitritic element, which generally accords with epinician style, though where Pindar and Bacchylides use dactylo-epitrites at all they have no admixture of any other meter.[96]

Despite its Pindaric affinities, however, this ode is a strange epinicion. Where Pindar seeks a victor to praise, the Chorus here starts with a victor and seeks someone who was defeated. Although in the contest between

Heracles and Achelous the former is the victor, actually both are the victims of Aphrodite.[97] Even victory, therefore, is a kind of defeat. The end of the antistrophe emphasizes the common subjection to Aphrodite of Heracles and Achelous;[98] both contestants charge toward the middle (ἐς μέσον 514), desiring a bed (λεχέων 514), but there in the middle (ἐν μέσῳ 515), connected somehow to a nice bed (εὔλεκτρος 515), Aphrodite joins them (ξυνοῦσα 516). Each combatant, heading toward his adversary in the middle, there finds Aphrodite, their only adversary and only desire. ξυνοῦσα even suggests that the combat itself is a form of intercourse with Aphrodite.[99]

By identifying Aphrodite as the arbiter of the contest (516), moreover, the Chorus contradicts Deianeira's assertion that Zeus determined the outcome (τέλος δ' ἔθηκε Ζεύς 26). In doing so they leave open to question the authority of their account, and their apparent answer to this question undermines the epinician confidence in the authority of myth itself. The Chorus identify their source for the narration as their mother (ἐγὼ δὲ μάτηρ μὲν οἷα φράζω 526).[100] This explains how they can describe what they did not see.[101] But the epinician-epic question, such as that asked by the Chorus earlier (504-505), implied an answer from the Muses, as at *Il.* 2.485-486 and Pi.*O.*3.4. The Chorus therefore derives its account from precisely the κλέος disparaged by Homer in favor of the Muses' true language. But they render this mere report believable by referring to the present (527-528),[102] a variant of the rhetoric of knowledge. The Chorus' logic conforms therefore to the syndrome of deriving or confirming a verbal account (often a general rule) from only a few empirically observed particulars.

The Chorus leaves unclear, however, whether the evidence to which they refer is Deianeira or Iole. Iole, after all, is now in Deianeira's former position as the recently fought-for bride of Heracles. The confusion in the Chorus' expression suggests that Deianeira's condition has not really changed since her betrothal,[103] and thus indicates the identification between Deianeira and Iole upon which we have already remarked.[104]

The nature of eros

Recent discussions of the *Trachiniae* emphasizing its preoccupation with eros have sometimes tended to depict eros as a purely physical force.[105] The Chorus, however, indicates another aspect of eros, its deceptiveness, in mentioning that Aphrodite tricked Zeus (ἀπάτασεν 500).[106] The question of whether eros is primarily instinctual, or a product of deluded intellect, mirrors the impossibility of knowing Heracles' true motive for desiring Iole: he

may have desired her as a sexual partner or as a prestigious signifier. Of course, sexual desire and the deceptiveness of signifiers are explicitly connected in one of our major sophistic texts, Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen*.

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